

# SSHRC STORYTELLERS CHALLENGE 2024

Top 20 Finalists

*CONCOURS J'AI UNE HISTOIRE À RACONTER 2024 DU CRSH*

20 finalistes



# Improving African Futures Using Lessons from the Past

by Allison Balabuch

Imagine if your school textbooks told the stories of everyone...  
*but you.*

**Their books are filled with stories of apple trees and snowflakes while you study under the mango tree.**



In the Banda region of Ghana, students could not see themselves or their ancestors reflected in their schools.

School textbooks are written in English. Many parents and grandparents speak a different local language.

As a doctoral student in Education, I was asked to create a school textbook for their youth. I had an extensive digital repository of research and images but little experience with anything about Africa.

*Why?*

**African history is rarely taught in Canadian schools. All we learn is a deficit model of Africa.**

**After 40 years of archaeology research, the community asked for a way to share their local history and heritage with their children.**



**We are not taught that Africa has a rich history of science, art, and land stewardship.**

**I travelled to Ghana with a draft resource to consult with the community, teachers, and students.**



The finished book is free online for anyone in both English and Nafaanra - the main local language.



Most schools in Banda don't have access to internet. We printed 1000 copies for their local schools



**Through this project, I have been able to create something that can be a spark for change.**

*Why?*

Children in Ghana can see themselves and their community as valued.

Children across the globe can build a new understanding of Africa.

**We cannot talk about decolonizing our education systems globally if we do not start telling new stories about Africa.**



**Want to discover more great research stories?  
View all the entries for this year's Top 20 finalists.  
[www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/storytellers/gallery](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/storytellers/gallery)**

**Vous voulez découvrir plus d'histoires de recherche exceptionnelles?  
Consulter les soumissions des 20 finalistes de 2024.  
[www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/récit/galerie](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/récit/galerie)**



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

**Canada**